Overview of eCGAP

The electronic Competitive Grant Application Process was launched in 2003 as part of the overall eRA project to create an end-to-end electronic receipt and grants management system.

NIH made the decision at the start of the project that it would build a system to receive applications but would not develop systems for applicants or institutions to use to send applications to the NIH. To fill this gap, it awarded six commercial companies, also known as Service Providers, with Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grants to develop system-to-system software for submitting applications.

At the same time, the government had determined that it would develop a Website for receiving applications from the public and dispersing them to appropriate agencies, a one-stop shopping concept. The SBIRs developed their products and services to work with the NIH directly but eventually with the federal eGrants initiative, now called Grants.gov.

Number of applications

Since October 2003, NIH has conducted four pilots. In January 2005, NIH moved out of pilot phase and went to open submission — inviting all applicants to submit grant applications for the select grant mechanisms offered. To date, NIH has received more than 170 grant applications over 12 receipt dates, using the Public Health Service 398 (PHS398) form, with 48 institutions nationwide participating.

RECEIPT DATE	TOTAL
Oct. 1 , 2003	8
Nov. 1, 2003	5
Feb. 1, 2004	1
March 1, 2004	3
June 1, 2004	16
July 1, 2004	14
Oct. 1, 2004	26
Nov. 1, 2004	19
Feb. 1, 2005	21
March 1, 2005	19
June 1, 2005	24
July 1, 2005	19

Kind of Grant Applications

NIH accepts simple, modular (seeking less than $250,000 a year in direct costs), competing grant applications for the following grant mechanisms through eCGAP:

- R01 — the investigator initiated standard research grant
- R03— small research projects grant
- R21— exploratory/developmental research grant

Full budgets are in pilot mode, meaning only a limited number can be submitted.

These applications can be:

- New
- Competing continuation
- Revised

Six Service Providers

NIH is currently working with six commercial Service Providers, who have developed a system-to-system interface with NIH to submit grant applications on behalf of applicants:

- Cayuse Inc., Portland, OR
- Clinical Tools, Chapel Hill, NC
- ERA Software Systems, Long Beach, CA
- Formatta Corporation, Herndon, VA
- InfoEd International, Albany, NY
- Research and Management Systems (RAMS), Germantown, MD

Each Service Provider has to be certified by NIH before they can submit grant applications on behalf of their clients. This certification is granted to Service Providers after they successfully submit the type or types of grant applications in NIH's test environment that they intend to submit during a real grant submission cycle. For instance, the successful submission of one simple (R01, R03 or R21) modular new application in a test environment certifies the Service Provider to submit simple modular new applications.

Process

In the eCGAP process:

- The applicant submits an electronic grant application through a chosen Service Provider.
- The Service Provider submits a Ticket request, which tells the NIH that a specific application is ready for submission.
- The NIH sends the Service Provider a response message containing the assigned Ticket Number.
- NIH retrieves the grant package (in an XML data stream plus attachments for that application) from the Service Provider through a system-to-system interface.
- The electronic applications are validated and processed into the eRA system.
- If there are errors, NIH notifies the Signing Official and Principal Investigator via the Service Provider.
- NIH sends a response message to the Service Provider in response to the application processing. If there are errors and/or warnings, they are included in the response message.

In addition, the PI and SO are sent an email indicating that errors and/or warnings occurred during processing of their grant applications and that they can view them in the Commons.

- The applicant, working with the Service Provider, corrects the application and resubmits.
- Once an error-free submission is received , NIH saves the application data in the eRA database and creates and stores an electronic grant image.
- Any warning messages associated with the application are also saved and viewable in the Commons.
- The Principal Investigator and Signing Official view the grant image in NIH eRA Commons and verify that the application is correct.
- Once verified, the application moves into the electronic review process, beginning with eCGAP Receipt and Referral.

Upcoming Receipt Dates

- October 1, 2005
- November 1, 2005

Future of eCGAP

Eventually, NIH will require mechanisms currently accepted through eCGAP to be submitted to NIH via Grants.gov using the Standard Form 424 (R&R) family of forms. A projected timeline for having these mechanisms submitted to NIH via to Grants.gov is as follows:

- R03 and R21 — June 2006
- R01 — October 2006

Some of the Service Providers have indicated they plan to develop a system-to-system interface with Grants.gov to submit grant applications to NIH.